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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Statistics

**Sixth session**

Bangkok, 16–19 October 2018

Item 2 of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of overall progress with respect to the document entitled “Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community”**

**Strengthening gender for the gender perspective in the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action\*\***

*Summary*

The present document highlights opportunities for taking collective action to improve gender data and statistics in Asia and the Pacific. It illustrates how, in coordination with ESCAP and other partners in the region, UN-Women and its Flagship Programme Initiative on Statistics: “Making Every Woman and Girl Count” could substantially contribute to implementing the Collective Vision and Framework for Action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community to advance official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by enhancing the production, dissemination and use of gender-related statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, the paper puts forth possible ways to achieve this goal, ranging from an assessment of existing gender-related statistical work and needs in Asia and the Pacific, which could be facilitated by UN-Women’s participation in the Committee’s different work streams, to an evaluation of the feasibility and appetite for establishing an inter-governmental mechanism to pursue technical work on gender-sensitive data and statistics.

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\*\* This present document is being issued without formal editing.

## I. Introduction: Normative advances and remaining challenges for measuring progress on gender equality and women's empowerment

1. A number of global, regional and national commitments have set up compacts and international goals on gender equality and women's empowerment. These range from essential landmark agreements such as the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, to newer and more action-oriented commitments that are wider in scope, such as the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, the call for investments in accurate, periodic and timely statistics on the status of women, men, girls and boys, is not new. Gender data gaps, however, remain widespread and gender is still not efficiently and consistently integrated in many statistical areas. To overcome existing limitations and ensure quality gender data is efficiently produced, disseminated and used, UN-Women in coordination with many other development actors is implementing its Flagship Programme "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" (MEWGC).

2. The programme builds on the numerous efforts for improving the availability and quality of gender statistics that have taken place in recent years. Notably, in 2006 the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) endorsed a Global Gender Statistics Programme<sup>1</sup> (GGSP); and an Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) was created in 2007. In Asia and the Pacific, the Committee on Statistics (CST)<sup>2</sup> endorsed in 2016 the "Collective Vision and Framework for Action for Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".<sup>3</sup> The Framework translates the vision into collective actions for advocacy, investment, user engagement, production and use of integrated statistics, modernization of business processes and skills strengthening to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia-Pacific. In contribution to the Collective Vision and Framework for Action, this Committee also endorsed the implementation plan for the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific (RS-PSS)<sup>4</sup>. The three goals of this strategy—enabling policy environment, strengthened production and enhanced accessibility and use of population and social statistics -- align well with the outcomes of the Making Every Women and Girl Count programme. Despite all these advancements, widespread gender data gaps prevail and the full and consistent integration of gender in statistical processes remains a challenge, both globally and in the Asia-Pacific region. Overcoming normative, technical and financial barriers to gender data production and utilization is thus a key priority.

<sup>1</sup> E/CN.3/2011/4. Global Gender Statistics Programme. Report of the Secretary-General. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc11/2011-4-SG-GenderStats-E.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee on Statistics, a biennial intergovernmental forum of Chief Statisticians of countries in the ESCAP region, provides oversight and direction on ESCAP's statistical work. The Committee reports to the Commission.

<sup>3</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1. Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a Collective Vision and Framework for Action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E.ESCAP\\_CST\(5\).1.Rev\\_1.Collective\\_Vision.English.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E.ESCAP_CST(5).1.Rev_1.Collective_Vision.English.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(5)/3. Meeting the data and statistics needs for socially inclusive development for all: proposed implementation plan for the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E.ESCAP\\_CST\(5\).3.Implementation\\_plan.English.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E.ESCAP_CST(5).3.Implementation_plan.English.pdf).

## II. Gaps in data related to the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective

### A. Gender in the Sustainable Development Goals monitoring and indicator framework

3. In early 2018, a study conducted by UN-Women identified that out of 232 Sustainable Development Goal indicators, 54 are gender-specific, meaning they are either targeted at women and girls, explicitly call for disaggregation by sex or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective.<sup>5</sup> Of these, roughly 33 per cent are classified as Tier III and another 47 per cent as Tier II, meaning specific methodological guidelines and sufficient data availability for global monitoring is only possible in the remaining 20 per cent<sup>6</sup>.

Table 1  
**Distribution of the 54 gender specific indicators in the Global Monitoring Framework, by tier**

	<i>SDG1 No Poverty</i>	<i>SDG2 Zero Hunger</i>	<i>SDG3 Good Health and Well- being</i>	<i>SDG4 Quality Education</i>	<i>SDG5 Gender Equity</i>	<i>SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth</i>	<i>SDG10 Reduced Inequalities</i>	<i>SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities</i>	<i>SDG13 Climate Action</i>	<i>SDG16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</i>	<i>SDG17 Partners hip for the Goals</i>
Tier I	1.1.1 1.2.1		3.1.1 3.1.2 3.3.1 3.7.1	4.2.2	5.5.1(a) 5.5.2 5.b.1	8.5.2				16.1.1	
Tier II	1.2.2 1.4.2		3.7.2 3.8.1	4.1.1(b) 4.1.1(c) 4.3.1 4.6.1 4.a.1	5.1.1 5.2.1 5.2.2 5.3.1 5.3.2 5.4.1 5.5.1(b) 5.6.1 5.a.1 5.a.2 5.c.1	8.3.1 8.5.1 8.7.1 8.8.1		11.2.1		16.2.2 16.2.3	
Tier III	1.3.1 1.b.1	2.3.2		4.1.1(a) 4.2.1 4.5.1 4.7.1	5.6.2	8.8.2 8.9.2	10.2.1	11.7.1 11.7.2	13.b.1	16.1.2 16.7.1 16.7.2	17.18.1

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘gender-specific indicators’ is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population.

<sup>6</sup> Percentages have been rounded and slightly adjusted to reflect indicators that are multi-tier and thus fall under Tier 2 and 3 at the same time.

## **B. Status of availability of gender-specific indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals**

4. Of the 54 gender-specific indicators, only 19 per cent have enough quality and regular data for global monitoring purposes.<sup>7</sup> Oceania<sup>8</sup> is the world's region with the least amount of data, at 13 per cent. The timeliness and frequency of data production also hamper policy makers reliance on data for decision making. Only 24 per cent of the data available for gender-specific indicators were from 2010 or later. Oceania, again, was the region with the least amount of timely gender data, as only 9 per cent were from 2010 or later.<sup>9</sup>

5. In Asia and the Pacific, 85 unique gender-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators were identified as relevant for the region, including the 54 gender-specific mentioned above.<sup>10</sup> Among the 86, more than 26 per cent were widely available in the region as of December 2017, 21 per cent were somewhat available and 41 per cent had no data.<sup>11</sup> Data for indicators under Goal 5 was largely missing, with particularly limited availability for countries in North and North-East Asia on areas such as violence against women, female land holders and child marriage rates. The Pacific was identified as the sub-region with the lowest levels of gender data availability, with particular deficits in economic indicators of high relevance to gender equality such as poverty rates, gender wage gaps and food insecurity.<sup>12</sup>

6. Although differences exist across Asia-Pacific countries, similar patterns can be identified across regional, sub-regional and even national data availability assessments regarding data timeliness and regularity; sufficient data to monitor trends and pace of progress is rarely available. For instance, globally, in Central and Southern Asia and in Nepal, around 1/4 of gender-specific had at least one data point available in the Sustainable Development Goals global database as of December 2017. In turn, only 1/6 of indicators had enough data to monitor trends, and roughly 1/7 had three or more data points and thus allowed for monitoring the pace of progress.

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<sup>7</sup> Turning promises into action, page 54.

<sup>8</sup> Regional classification follows official SDG regions. Namely, for Oceania this includes: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States minor outlying islands and Vanuatu.

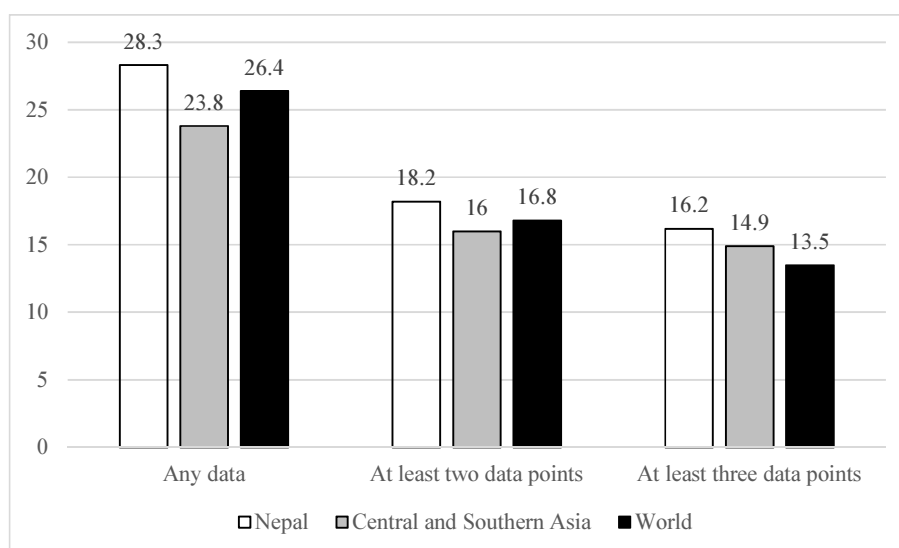
<sup>9</sup> UN Women, Turning Promises into Action, February 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Beyond the 54 indicators identified globally as gender-specific, 34 additional indicators were identified in Asia and the Pacific as relevant to benchmarking the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Asia and Pacific region. Of this combined list of 88 gender-related indicators, 85 are unique (since indicator 1.5.1 was considered the same as indicators 11.5.1 and 13.1.1; while indicator 10.3.1 was deemed the same as indicator 16.b.1).

<sup>11</sup> Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific, Baseline and pathways for transformative change by 2030, UN Women – ADB, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific, Baseline and pathways for transformative change by 2030, UN Women – ADB, 2018.

Figure 1  
**Percentage of global gender-specific indicators in UNSD global SDGs database**



### C. Focus on Data on Women’s Economic Empowerment

7. In 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General established the High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment to accelerate women’s economic participation and empowerment in line with the 2030 Agenda and its promise that no one will be left behind. Among the Panel’s recommendations, one is that national governments “incorporate measures of paid and unpaid care work in national statistics” to recognize, redistribute and reduce care work. Other intergovernmental fora have made similar recommendations in the past, including the Commission on the Status of Women, which highlighted the value of measuring unpaid work in its 62nd session.

8. In connection to this, UN-Women and the United Nations Statistics Division launched Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) in 2013, a joint initiative to improve the integration of gender issues into the regular production of official statistics with a focus on health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and asset ownership. Among other achievements, the project has generated internationally agreed methodological guidelines on measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.

9. In Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP’s Gender Policy-Data Integration Initiative also aims to strengthen data and statistics on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment,<sup>13</sup> specifically promoting user-producer engagement by enhancing capacity of national statistical offices and policy counterparts to identify data and information needs, and of relevant national stakeholders in the dissemination, analysis and use of existing gender-sensitive data for advocacy.

10. UN-Women’s global programme “Making Every Woman and Girl Count” (MEWGC) aims at further supporting countries for the creation, dissemination and use of gender statistics, a key focus area being economic empowerment statistics. In Asia and the Pacific, the programme builds on existing initiatives and promotes the production, dissemination and use of these statistics in coordination with global and regional actors. Direct technical

<sup>13</sup> For details on this initiative see ESCAP/CTS/2018/INF/2.

support for the implementation of Time Use Surveys in Nepal and Bangladesh, for instance, is already underway.

11. Beyond women's economic empowerment, other regionally relevant areas are covered under the regional programme, including support to the production and use of quality civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS), in response to the recent adoption of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Declaration on this topic.<sup>14</sup>

### **III. Taking collective action to accelerate gender data production and dissemination to support monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific**

#### **A. Understanding gender statistics' challenges and gaps in Asia and the Pacific**

12. The existing challenges for the production and dissemination of gender statistics in Asia and the Pacific can largely be linked to three distinct but inter-related problems: weak policy environment for the production of gender statistics; technical challenges for data collection and analysis; and limited data dissemination capacity of governments.

13. The policy space in many countries in Asia and the Pacific is still relatively weak when it comes to gender-sensitive data and statistics, as legal and financial constraints often limit their production. Less than 43 per cent of non-developed countries in the region are currently implementing a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics,<sup>15</sup> and many of these do not have specific gender components, nor is gender fully mainstreamed throughout the strategies. As a result, gender-sensitive data production and dissemination efforts are often allocated low priority and resources.

14. Limited technical capacity, particularly with regard to the production of data on sensitive topics, methodologically demanding areas, or emerging fields, also limits the availability of quality gender data. For instance, many countries in the region struggle with the regular production and dissemination of quality statistics on violence against women and reproductive health, due to their sensitive nature. Similarly, the availability of statistics for some emerging areas, such as Sustainable Development Goal indicators classified as Tiers II and III, is relatively scarce - only 24 per cent of the Tier III and only 44 per cent of Tier II gender-related indicators had available data as of December 2017.<sup>16</sup>

15. The limited data dissemination and communication capacities of some national statistical systems are another impediment to promoting gender-sensitive data use. In many countries, statistical products prepared following data collection exercises remain unused as limitations are in place in terms of data openness and resources allocated to communication and dissemination strategies. Limited data analysis capacity of policy makers and other users also contributes to the underutilization of available gender-sensitive statistics.

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<sup>14</sup> E/ESCAP/MCCRVS/4.

<sup>15</sup> PARIS21, 2017, <http://paris21.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/NSDS-status-Feb2017.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Gender Equality and the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, 2018.

## **B. Opportunities to take collective action on gender data: The Making Every Woman and Girl Count Programme and its connections to the Collective Vision and Framework for Action**

16. The Collective Vision and Framework for Action adopted by ESCAP's Committee on Statistics in 2016<sup>17</sup> recognizes the importance of gender-sensitive data and statistics, as it addresses issues of disaggregation in social, economic and environmental statistics. Under the vision's Action Area A, the essential role of statistics is recognized for follow up and review of Agenda 2030, including by "facilitating the engagement of users and producers of statistics in identifying target population groups that can inform data disaggregation strategies." In several sessions, the Committee has also discussed the relevance of improving the quality and availability of Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, including gender-sensitive data and statistics across various statistical domains.

17. In connection to these priorities, UN-Women's Global Flagship Programme Making Every Woman and Girl Count sets out a clear goal -- "Gender statistics in ESCAP member States are available, accessible, analyzed and used to inform policy-making and advocacy and promote accountability for delivering gender equality and women's empowerment"- and three key objectives, which are in line with the Vision's priorities and address the three challenges mentioned in paragraphs 12-15 above respectively. In Asia and the Pacific, the approach of this programme is twofold: (i) provide direct technical and financial support to countries and (ii) work with regional partners to help localize and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender equality perspective. The programme prioritizes interventions in a set of pathfinder countries<sup>18</sup> but ultimately reaches all Asia-Pacific countries. Direct technical support, for instance, is provided to pathfinder and non-pathfinder countries, based on demand.

18. The programme's first objective, to ensure that supportive and well-coordinated policy environments are in place for effective monitoring of development goals, includes activities such as supporting gender mainstreaming in regional and national legislation and plans. For instance, in Nepal UN-Women is helping the government integrate gender in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and the new Statistics Act. It also supports the establishment of a Coordination Group comprising policy makers and data producers across the National Statistical System.

19. The second objective, to ensure that quality, comparable and regular gender statistics are available to address data gaps and meet policy and reporting commitments, covers, among other interventions, financial and technical support for the production of gender data through instruments such as a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Fiji, a Time Use Survey in Nepal and reprocessing of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in various countries, including Nepal and Bangladesh.

<sup>17</sup> E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

<sup>18</sup> Pathfinder countries were identified through a rigorous and independent process applying criteria that included their commitment to women's and girls' rights and to high statistical standards, country-level demand including demonstrable need and institutional commitment to improve gender statistics, and motivation to be part of a global and inclusive learning process on gender statistics. The pathfinder countries selected for Asia and the Pacific include Nepal and Bangladesh as priority countries, potentially by Cambodia and Thailand. In addition, specific attention is to be focused on the Pacific, both sub-regionally and on select individual countries. Direct technical support, however, may be provided to non-pathfinder countries upon request.

20. The third objective, to ensure that gender statistics are accessible to all users and can be analyzed to inform research, advocacy, policies, programmes and accountability, includes activities such as regional training on gender data reporting using Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX), technical support for data producers on communication strategies in Nepal, and various forms of user-producer dialogues, such as Bangladesh's thematic research grants for users of gender data.

21. These three objectives align well with the Action Areas within the Collective Vision and Framework for Action and can therefore support its implementation. Objective 1 is in line with the Framework's Action Area B, which focuses on ensuring that National Statistical Systems have legal frameworks and strategies that support Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and enable adequate coordination. Objective 2 is in line with Action Areas C and D on coherently integrating data from multiple sources for statistical products and utilizing modernized tools for strengthening the quality of information management. Objective 3 aligns well with Action Areas A and D, which cover issues such as national statistical systems being responsive to user's needs, mapping business processes and implementing modernized tools like SDMX to strengthen data exchanges.

22. Notably, components of Action Area E on the importance of guiding materials and trainings are present in all three objectives of the Making Every Woman and Girl Count Programme. For instance, under the programme, training was delivered in Nepal on designing and implementing Time Use and Violence Against Women surveys; regional training on SDMX is being developed; and UN-Women and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) are working to establish a Subgroup on Gender Statistics within SIAP's Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training. If established in September 2018, the Subgroup will work on jointly designing training on gender statistics.

23. Because of the multiple synergies between the Collective Vision and Framework for Action and the Making Every Woman and Girl Count programme, their joint implementation can be key for enhancing the availability, quality and use of gender statistics in Asia and the Pacific. Synergies between the programme and ESCAP's Gender-Policy Data Integration Initiative will also be leveraged to efficiently achieve this goal. ESCAP's Policy-Data Integration Tool (EPIC), which helps identify data and information needs through policy content analysis, will help policy makers assess needs for, and promote the use of, gender-sensitive data and statistics and is therefore in line with the programme's objectives 1 and 3. Similarly, ESCAP's guidelines for progress assessment and gender analysis on issues related to women's economic empowerment can contribute to the programme's objective 3, as they will facilitate the production of publications and the use of gender-sensitive data. Notably, the guidelines are a logical step towards promoting the utilization of Time Use data, which the programme will widely support. To leverage these synergies, ESCAP and UN-Women will jointly design and implement capacity building activities and user-producer dialogues.

24. Finally, in contribution to all three objectives, but particularly objective 1, UN-Women approached the Secretariat of ESCAP's Committee on Statistics to explore the possibility of establishing an inter-governmental group on gender statistics for Asia and the Pacific, similar to the global Inter-Agency



and Expert Group on Gender statistics and regional equivalents.<sup>19</sup> This mechanism could promote regional alignment of technical work and advocacy strategies, inform global discussions and foster south-south cooperation on gender-sensitive data and statistics. To assess whether there is a need and appetite this group, and to promote the integration of gender across statistical domains and processes, the Secretariat suggested that, as a starting position, UN-Women becomes a member and contributor to the Committee's regional initiative groups.<sup>20</sup> At a later stage and in view of information gathered through this collaboration, UN-Women might consider formally proposing the establishment of the group for the Committee's consideration.

#### **IV. Conclusion and way forward**

25. Gender-sensitive data and statistics are critical to measure development comprehensively and meeting the promise of leaving no one behind. To promote the production and utilization of quality gender statistics in Asia and the Pacific, UN-Women, in coordination with ESCAP and other regional partners, is implementing its flagship programme Making Every Woman and Girl Count. The programme has the potential to support the implementation of the Collective Vision and Framework for Action by backing Member States in setting up enabling environments and coordination mechanisms for gender data production and dissemination, providing resources to produce quality gender statistics, and supporting the wide utilization of these statistics. UN-Women could further promote the integration of gender across different statistical workstreams in the region, by participating in each of the Committee's thematic groups and assessing the need for an inter-governmental group on gender statistics.

26. The present report provides background information on all these initiatives. It highlights the joint efforts that ESCAP, UN-Women and other development partners are undertaking to improve gender-sensitive data and statistics in the region as a means to achieving the Collective Vision and Framework for Action. By informing Member States of existing plans, they can fully benefit from current efforts. Reports to the Committee will be provided in future sessions to deliver updates on progress undertaken in the region.

27. The Committee may wish to take note and express their views on the present report; particularly, pertaining to planned activities and areas of collaboration to promote efficient and comprehensive mainstreaming of gender across statistical data production, dissemination and use in Asia and the Pacific.

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<sup>19</sup> See the work of the such Africa Group on Gender Statistics and the European Gender Steering group.

<sup>20</sup> At present these include: economic statistics, population and social statistics, civil registration and vital statistics, disaster-related statistics and agricultural and rural statistics.